

FACT SHEET



FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy

Adolescent Substance Abuse, Sexual Activity and Childbearing

The prevalence of substance use among adolescent mothers is significant. The tendency of the adolescent mother to reduce substance use during pregnancy may provide a window of opportunity in the immediate postpartum period for the clinician to emphasize healthy choices by the mother. *

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RESEARCH

Children who are poor, underachieving in school, involved in delinquent behavior, and from unsupportive families are more apt to use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Children who are depressed, have low self-esteem, or have psychopathology are at great risk for substance use. Peer use and family use are strong factors associated with initiation of use.

Alcohol use in adolescents is a strong predictor of both sexual activity and unprotected sex. Teenage girls who drink are more likely to have sex and to have it without a condom than girls who do not drink alcohol.

Researchers estimate that alcohol use is implicated in one- to two-thirds of sexual assault and “date rape” cases among teens and college students.

A survey of high school students found that 39% of males **and 18% of females** say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex if the girl is stoned or drunk.

Half of the girls who have sexual intercourse by the age of 16 are intoxicated at the time and half of these later regret their actions.

In a study of over 1,000 teenagers, respondents who reported illicit drug use also were more likely to report four or more sex partners, to be inconsistent condom users, to have had a sexually transmitted infection, and to report a pregnancy within the last year.

Drug use rates are higher among adolescent mothers than in school-based samples of female adolescents without children. It may adversely effect parenting performance and the child’s home environment.

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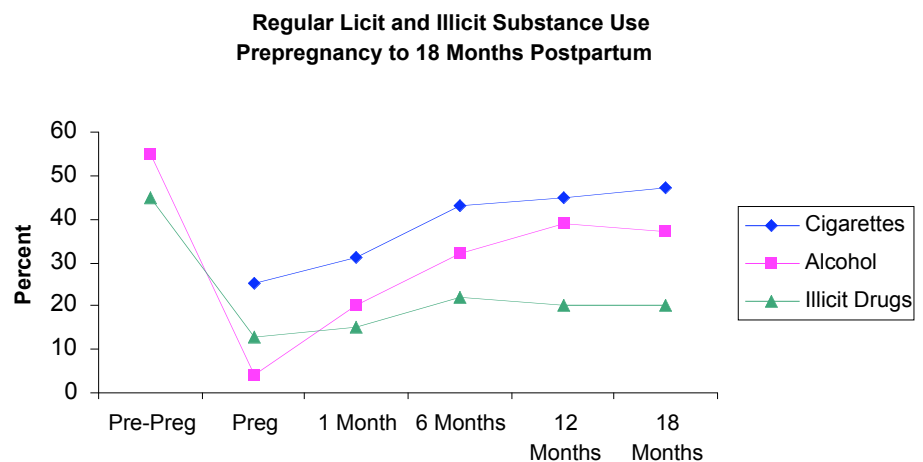
RESEARCH

Many adolescent parents are embedded in environments with very high rates of substance abuse among family members, partners, and peers.

There is evidence that teenagers perceive substance use as a risk to their pregnancies and their unborn children.

Substance abuse in adolescent mothers during the first four months postpartum was related to depression, stress, and the perceived need for social support.

Pregnancy may serve as an incentive for at least some adolescents to reduce or eliminate recreational drug use, at least for the duration of the pregnancy. Use of cigarettes, marijuana, alcohol, and crack cocaine among pregnant adolescents decreased substantially during pregnancy, but increased steadily in the first six months postpartum.



While the condition of pregnancy itself may provide an important impetus for young women to alter substance use, parenthood may provide a comparable motivation when accompanied by the same educational emphasis and support that the pregnancy has received.

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